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Enhanced cooperation and policy and programme coordination, including the provision of further guidance to the Collaborative Partnership on Forests

Letter dated 6 January 2015 from the Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that the Chinese State Forestry Administration hosted a workshop in Beijing from 29 to 31 October 2014 on the theme "Elements for strengthening the international arrangement on forests beyond 2015: ensuring the implementation of forest-related commitments".

The workshop provided an opportunity to examine options for strengthening the international arrangement on forests in many areas with respect to both a non-legally binding future arrangement and a legally binding instrument. The workshop also provided an opportunity for initial reflection by the participants on the report on the independent assessment of the international arrangement with a focus on future options for the arrangement.

In the light of the importance of the workshop and its relevance to the ongoing work of the United Nations, particularly in the field of forests, I am hereby attaching a summarized report of the workshop (see annex) and would be grateful if you would circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the eleventh session of the United Nations Forum on Forests.

(*Signed*) **Liu** Jieyi
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* E/CN.18/2015/1.

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Annex to the letter dated 6 January 2015 from the Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Co-Chairs summary report of the workshop on the international arrangement on forests beyond 2015

Beijing, 29 to 31 October 2014

A country-led initiative in support of the United Nations Forum on Forests*

I. Introduction

1. At its eleventh session (New York, 4-15 May 2015), the United Nations Forum of Forests will review the effectiveness of the current international arrangement on forests and, on that basis, will decide how to strengthen the international arrangement beyond 2015. In preparing for the 2015 review, the Forum commissioned an independent assessment of the international arrangement[1] and agreed to convene two meetings of an ad hoc expert group. The first meeting of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Ad Hoc Expert Group on the International Arrangement on Forests was held in Nairobi from 24 to 28 February 2014; the second was held in New York from 12 to 16 January 2015.

2. As a contribution to the discussions of the second meeting of the Expert Group and the eleventh session of the Forum, the Chinese State Forestry Administration organized and hosted a workshop in Beijing from 29 to 31 October 2014 on the theme "Elements for strengthening the international arrangement on forests beyond 2015: ensuring implementation of forest-related commitments" (annex 1).

The major topics covered at the workshop included:

- Strengthening regional/subregional involvement in the international arrangement
- Strengthening the role and functioning of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests
- Strengthening the involvement of major groups and other stakeholders in the international arrangement
- Scaling up the facilitative process under the international arrangement
- Low-cost, high-value actions achievable over a relevant two-to-three-year horizon under the international arrangement
- Possible elements of a strategic plan for the international arrangement

* Annexes to the summary report are not attached, but are available from the following website: http://cli2014china.forestry.gov.cn.

[1] The advanced unedited report on the independent assessment of the international arrangement on forests is available from www.un.org/esa/forests.

3. The workshop provided an opportunity to examine options for strengthening the international arrangement in those areas in respect of both a non-legally binding future arrangement and a legally binding instrument. The workshop also provided an opportunity for initial reflections by participants on the report on the independent assessment of the international arrangement with a focus on future options for the arrangement.

4. **Co-sponsors and steering committee**. The workshop was co-sponsored by Austria, Canada, China, Finland, Germany, Switzerland and the United States of America. The steering committee for the preparation and organization of the workshop comprised co-sponsoring countries as well as Brazil, Indonesia, Japan, the Russian Federation, South Africa, the Forestry Department of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the secretariats of the International Tropical Timber Organization and the United Nations Forum on Forests.

5. **Participants**. The workshop brought together over 100 participants from 55 countries and from 18 international, regional and non-governmental organizations (annex 2).

6. **Format**. The workshop included plenary and parallel sessions (annex 3) and was co-chaired by representatives of the following: Chinese State Forestry Administration (Wu Zhimin) and Natural Resources Canada (Peter Besseau). The sessions were facilitated by representatives of the following: Swiss Federal Office for the Environment (Sibylle Vermont) and South African Department of International Relations and Cooperation (Elise Haber). Rapporteurs included the representatives of the following: Permanent Mission of Brazil to the United Nations (Vicente Bezerra); United States Department of State (Rowena Watson); United States Forest Service (Aysha Ghadiali); and Forests Programme, World Resources Institute (Chip Barber, Co-Chair of the first meeting of the Expert Group).

7. **Opening**. The workshop was opened by the master of ceremonies and Vice Minister of the Chinese State Forestry Administration, Liu Dongsheng. The Minister of the Chinese State Forestry Administration, Zhao Shucong, gave an opening statement on behalf of the host country (annex 4). Following his address, remarks were made by the Chair of the Bureau of the eleventh session of the Forum and Minister of Forests, Environment and Protection of Natural Resources of Gabon, Noël Nelson Messone; and the Director General for Bio-based Economy, Sustainable Agriculture and Forestry of the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Clemens Neumann (annexes 5 and 6).

8. Following a welcome by Mr. Zhimin, Mr. Besseau reviewed the objectives, format and agenda of the workshop and noted that three documents had been prepared to facilitate discussions on workshop topics:

- Discussion paper on possible elements of a strategic plan for the future international arrangement
- List of topic questions to help focus discussions (annex 7)
- Compilation of proposals on the six workshop topics from the first meeting of the Expert Group and the independent assessment report on the international arrangement (annex 8)

9. Mr. Besseau explained that while participants were encouraged to respond to the questions formulated for each topic area, they were also welcome to share additional ideas and views. He noted that the questions should be considered in the context of the independent assessment report and the discussion paper on possible elements of a strategic plan for the future of the international arrangement on forests.

10. The Co-Chairs of the first meeting of the Expert Group (Chip Barber and Raymond Landveld (Suriname)) presented the results of that meeting.

II. Summary of key points from workshop discussions

A. Reflections on the general findings and options contained in the independent assessment of the international arrangement on forests

11. On behalf of the independent assessment team, Jürgen Blaser presented the findings contained in the report, including options proposed for the arrangement beyond 2015 (annex 9). Experts were invited to share their views on what they understood as key challenges, objectives and opportunities for the arrangement, which are summarized below. In response to questions from participants, Mr. Blaser provided clarifications on the following:

(a) **Options for the future of the international arrangement on forests**. The options represented a range of approaches for the future of the international arrangement. The building blocks and components associated with the options could be combined in various ways to create new options. The goal was to create an international arrangement that could leverage recognition, attention and resources. What was needed was to define the roles and responsibilities of the different building blocks of the international arrangement to form a global forest policy and governance framework applicable to all types of forests;

(b) **Proposed stewardship role of the international arrangement on forests**. The "stewardship" of forests in the context on the international arrangement meant providing leadership to promote the vital significance of forests for the economic and social development and environmental protection of all countries, to integrate forests in the broader sustainable development agenda and to promote the sustainable management of all types of forests and trees outside forests at all levels by, for example, providing relevant policy recommendations and advice, fostering coordination and collaboration among relevant stakeholders and mobilizing resources and high-level political support. In the future, the international arrangement should embrace the complexity of how forests are dealt with in the international context and strengthen linkages to other international forums and entities that affect forests;

(c) **"UN-Forests" concept**. The idea was to strengthen the science-policy implementation platform for forests across the United Nations system. One potential approach was to establish an inter-agency coordination mechanism/partnership that was more formal than the current Collaborative Partnership on Forests voluntary

arrangement, possibly modelled on UN-Water,[2] in order to provide stronger and more coherent support to the future international arrangement. More formality, together with dedicated financial resources (e.g., a trust fund), could produce more responsiveness to Forum requests. Such a mechanism would include interested members of the Partnership, especially those that are actively engaged in the current Partnership, as well as other organizations, such as globally oriented think tanks and major groups, including the private commercial sector and funding foundations;

(d) **Another option for a "UN-Forests" science/policy implementation platform**. Another option would be to follow the model of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The Panel is an independent intergovernmental body established by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) in 1988 to prepare policy-neutral science-based assessments on all aspects of climate change and its impacts. The Panel, which has 190 members, responds to requests from the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change for scientific and technical information;

(e) **Special envoy on forests**. The rationale for having the Secretary-General appoint a special envoy on forests was to empower an individual to raise the profile of forests in the context of the post-2015 development agenda. Ideally, such a special envoy would be an individual of recognized stature and convening power, such as a former prime minister or Head of State, rather than a senior official, technical expert or "Hollywood" personality.

12. The key points made during the discussion on the findings and options contained in the independent assessment report are summarized below:

(a) Participants expressed their appreciation for the independent assessment report and the work of the independent assessment team;

(b) Participants stressed the importance of strengthening the international arrangement;

(c) Compromise and consensus would be important as discussions on the international arrangement advanced through the second meeting of the Expert Group and the eleventh session of the Forum. Member States should work together to achieve pragmatic solutions at the eleventh session of the Forum. The solutions should take into account the diversity of demands and circumstances in individual countries and lead to improved national forestry governance systems;

(d) Whatever future course was decided at eleventh session of the Forum, it would be essential to develop a strategy to engage actors outside the forest sector

[2] UN-Water is the United Nations inter-agency coordination mechanism for all freshwater matters, including sanitation. It was established in 2003 following the World Summit on Sustainable Development to provide a platform to address the cross-cutting nature of water, facilitate joint efforts among existing programmes/projects and maximize the contribution of freshwater and sanitation to the Millennium Development Goals (sustainable development goals in the future). UN-Water currently has 31 agency members and 34 government and non-governmental partners and is supported by member contributions to an inter-agency trust fund managed by the United Nations Office for Project Services and voluntary contributions from donor partners (which totalled $2.67 million in 2013). The work of UN-Water is organized around thematic priority areas and task forces that address specific issues requiring long-term attention and strong inter-agency collaboration/coordination.

since the major drivers of deforestation and forest degradation operated in sectors such as agriculture, energy, mining and infrastructure development. The matter was urgent. The issue of forests must be placed firmly within the post-2015 development agenda and clearly demonstrate that forests contributed in multiple ways to enabling and supporting economic and social development and poverty eradication;

(e) The international arrangement must position itself to become a key champion of the forest-related sustainable development goals. Over the long term, the international arrangement should ensure that consideration of forests within the United Nations system takes into account all elements of sustainable forest management;

(f) Whether or not the Forum at its eleventh session took a decision to formally pursue the negotiation of a legally binding agreement, many elements currently in play would remain relevant (e.g., the need to work across sectors, the need to optimize work with Collaborative Partnership on Forests). Participants did not need to wait for a decision on such an agreement in order to begin important groundwork on other elements of a strengthened international arrangement;

(g) A multitrack/multipronged approach — with some members pursuing a legally binding agreement while all members continued to operate under a non-legally binding umbrella — was possible, as suggested in the independent assessment report, although admittedly complex;

(h) The independent assessment report contained a number of interesting institutional options but their feasibility and costs were not clear to many participants. Discussions during the second meeting of the Expert Group and the eleventh session of the Forum would benefit from further information regarding the feasibility, practicality and projected costs of those options;

(i) In the future, the international arrangement would need to enhance its role as a policy discussion body, including being a catalyst for policy implementation and helping to fill the gap between policy formulation and implementation. It was essential to identify what was needed in order for the international arrangement to become a catalyst;

(j) The need for an effective financial mechanism was noted by a number of participants as an important element of the international arrangement beyond 2015;

(k) In the long term, it was essential to be strategic and clear about what might be expected to be different in the years ahead as a result of the work undertaken. In the short term, and in parallel, it was crucial to be tactical, including by building a track record of success, which would include:

(i) Capitalizing much more effectively on the many examples of excellence that already existed;

(ii) Being pragmatic, flexible, dynamic and focused on catalysing implementation;

(iii) Identifying and focusing on clear priorities;

(iv) Enhancing inclusiveness with and relevance to major groups and other stakeholders and regional/subregional partners;

(v) Using the sustainable development goals to build bridges to other treaties and processes and, in parallel, build an organization that was focused, efficient, well led and knew its priorities;

(vi) Delivering a small number of striking, concrete ideas on what to do to get sustainable forest management recognized at the global level, especially within the context of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity, which focus on important but narrow dimensions of forests;

(vii) Taking advantage of the presence of the secretariat of the Forum at United Nations Headquarters and within the Economic and Social Council to build political support for sustainable forest management and the international arrangement within the broader United Nations system;

(l) There was a need to reduce fragmentation in and improve the global forest governance system;

(m) The independent assessment proposals seemed to expand the fragmentation in some ways. A more streamlined approach might be needed to bring various functions together;

(n) It was advantageous that the Forum, as a standing body of the Economic and Social Council, should have its secretariat located only steps away from the General Assembly. That valued proximity should not be underestimated The universal membership approach must be maintained;

(o) The proposal to transform the Forum into a "United Nations forest assembly" needed to be fleshed out in order to determine how the new body would differ in function and format from the Forum. Otherwise, it would appear to be a new label for the existing Forum. Rebranding was not enough;

(p) A strong future United Nations body and process on forests would need to ensure that policy is informed by relevant scientific and technological innovations, findings, data and information, rather than short-term national and special-interest economic and political considerations;

(q) A strengthened Forum should be sufficiently flexible to facilitate, on a time-bound basis, work on more priority issues that have a more narrow focus, possibly through the establishment of working groups and/or task forces.

B. Strengthening regional/subregional involvement in the international arrangement on forests

13. Participants heard presentations (annexes 10, 11 and 12) on the following: Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization, by a representative of the Brazilian Foreign Ministry (Natalya Shimada); the Congo Basin Forest Partnership, by a representative of the United States Department of State (Rowena Watson); and negotiations on a legally binding agreement on forests in Europe, by a representative of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management (Ingwald Gschwandtl). Following the plenary, participants broke into two groups to discuss the strengthening of regional/subregional involvement in the international arrangement.

14. The key points raised by the two groups in their discussions on strengthening regional/subregional involvement in the international arrangement are summarized below:

(a) Participants acknowledged the crucial contribution of regional and subregional approaches to the implementation of sustainable forest management;

(b) Regional cooperation should be considered under the global framework of the future international arrangement, which should provide an encouraging framework and platform for discussing and developing close linkages and connections between regional/subregional organizations, processes and mechanisms and the future global forest policy process of the Forum and should also improve regional forest-related cooperation mechanisms;

(c) Regional organizations, bodies, mechanisms and processes:

(i) Could provide effective platforms for coordination and information-sharing about the Forum while also helping to channel information from regions to the Forum at its sessions;

(ii) Could provide appropriate platforms to discuss the pros and cons of both regional and global legally binding agreement options, including in terms of what legally binding commitments might look like and what they might cost. There was considerable knowledge and experience in some regions regarding the challenges of securing and maintaining funding to implement regional agreements;

(iii) Were closer to local realities and were able to set their own rules of procedure and/or modalities and tend to allow for greater and more meaningful involvement of stakeholders;

(d) Other subglobal groupings were also useful for carrying forward the global forest agenda, including interregional, cross-regional and thematic cooperation arrangements, such as among small island developing States or low-forest-cover countries;

(e) While regional/subregional bodies, processes and mechanisms had great potential to serve as key elements of the future international arrangement, realizing their full potential as catalysts for sustainable forest management would, in many cases, require enhanced financial and technical support to build capacity, ensure broad participation and communicate regional/subregional experiences and priorities to the international arrangement at the global level;

(f) The facilitative process of the Forum was an important source of support for some regions and should be strengthened. There was also a need for stable funding for regional implementation of sustainable forest management in the long term;

(g) Differing views were offered on whether a global forest fund or more decentralized regionally based funds would be more effective strategies for enhancing financial resources available to regional processes and institutions. It was also noted that the two options were not mutually exclusive;

(h) In the future, the Forum could learn from the experiences of other intergovernmental forums regarding regional/subregional engagement;

(i) At the same time, regional/subregional cooperation on forests could benefit from the experience of regional platforms in other sectors, such as water. The regional process for the Niger River Basin was noted as an initiative having some success in bringing together water/land managers and policymakers;

(j) Further thought should be given to what specifically the international arrangement could offer as "value added" to regional organizations, mechanisms and processes;

(k) Further consideration was also needed on how the Forum sessions could integrate and benefit from regional perspectives. For example, it would be useful to enhance the exchange of good practices among regional/subregional organizations during Forum sessions and/or FAO-related sessions;

(l) Efforts to integrate regional/subregional approaches into the international arrangement in the future needed to recognize that many regional/subregional bodies were long-standing legal, political and/or partnership arrangements having their own mandates and priorities. The arrangement could not dictate to such regional/subregional bodies but should seek mutually beneficial areas for collaboration where mandates and priorities were complementary;

(m) In the future, the international arrangement should be pragmatic and linked to existing regional/subregional processes, where possible. One option for enhancing the "regional voice" in the international arrangement would be to convene regional meetings during the years in which the Forum did not meet, perhaps in conjunction with meetings of the FAO regional forestry commissions. Events like Asia-Pacific Forestry Week 2011 (held in China in conjunction with the meeting of the FAO Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission) illustrated that regional gatherings could attract broad, multi-stakeholder support, as well as high-level government participants. The regional commissions of the United Nations were also mentioned as an option;

(n) Regional meetings of the Forum could meet back-to-back with Forum meetings and/or relevant FAO meetings, such as the Committee on Forestry;

(o) The merits of those and other approaches to regional meetings, including interregional or thematic approaches, should be further considered;

(p) Member States, as members of, or participants in, regional/subregional bodies and mechanisms, could decide which of the regional/subregional bodies and mechanisms in which they were involved were appropriate for voluntary strengthened engagement in the international arrangement beyond 2015.

C. Strengthening the role and functioning of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests under the future international arrangement on forests

15. Participants were invited to share their views on the questions prepared for the topic, as well as other views. The key points raised on strengthening the role and functioning of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests are summarized below:

(a) Participants acknowledged the many accomplishments and contributions of the Partnership since the establishment of the Forum in 2000 and also

acknowledged the contribution that a partnership similar to the Partnership could make to the future international arrangement;

(b) Greater emphasis on coordination and harmonization of policy strategies for facilitating implementation should be priorities for the improvement of the role of the Partnership within the international arrangement;

(c) Participants also mentioned the importance of the Partnership for further enhancing implementation by Member States at the national and international levels, as well as for mainstreaming Forum decisions and concepts through Partnership members;

(d) A renewed Partnership could help to mobilize non-United Nations actors, regional mechanisms, funding agencies and other relevant stakeholders in support of the Forum in the future and serve as a channel for mainstreaming sustainable forest management through its United Nations and non-United Nations members;

(e) Formalization of the Partnership (e.g., through a memorandum of understanding or charter), accompanied by the establishment of a dedicated trust fund to support cooperative Partnership activities, could strengthen the Partnership's responsiveness and level of effort within the international arrangement;

(f) Under a more formalized scenario, the Partnership could function with a workplan and budget that would, for example, provide a basis for seeking contributions to a Partnership trust fund, leveraging other funding, increasing transparency and building clear linkages between the priorities of the international arrangements and the work programmes and plans of the member organizations of the Partnership;

(g) The functioning of the Partnership could also be improved through:

(i) Periodic rotation of the chairmanship of the Partnership among members to strengthen the sense of ownership and stimulate greater participation from Partnership members;

(ii) Effective new partners, including the regional development banks and other regional organizations;

(iii) Regular reporting on Partnership achievements in support of Forum priorities;

(h) Given its membership, the Partnership was a natural forum for enhancing forest-related science-policy dialogue. Partnership members had already taken initiatives in that regard, in particular through the global forest expert panels coordinated by the International Union of Forest Research Organizations;

(i) UN-Water could be a model for a renewed and strengthened Partnership. In that context, it was noted that it would be useful to have further information on the structure and functioning of UN-Water for experts to consider during second meeting of the Expert Group;

(j) Participants noted that States members of the Forum did not always speak consistently on forest issues or promote Forum decisions as members of the governing bodies of Partnership organizations. Coordination at the national level was crucial for the effective functioning of the future Partnership, in whatever form it took.

D. Strengthening the involvement of major groups and other stakeholders in the international arrangement on forests

16. Participants were invited to share their views on the questions prepared for the topic, as well as other views. The key points raised during the discussion on strengthening the involvement of major groups and other stakeholders in the international arrangement are summarized below:[3]

(a) Participants acknowledged the crucial role and contribution of major groups and other stakeholders in the implementation of sustainable forest management on the ground. They acknowledged that major groups had not seen the impact of Forum on the ground;

(b) Major groups tended to be more interested and had more involvement when there was a specific and definable policy issue to address and when they viewed the discussion in a neutral forum. Some policy goals could not be reached through intergovernmental dialogue alone or through industry discussions. General or aspirational discussions fell outside their realm of activity;

(c) The rules of procedure of the Economic and Social Council govern the accreditation, participation and intervention of major groups and other observers in Forum sessions. Given the potential difficulty of changing the rules to enhance the involvement of stakeholders in Forum discussions, the best course for the Forum might be to focus on becoming a more effective intergovernmental forum dealing with the limited but crucial areas of forest policy where only Governments can act;

(d) Major groups and other stakeholders could have a greater role in the work of the international arrangement, for example:

(i) As members of or advisers accredited to official national delegations to sessions of the Forum;[4]

(ii) As advisers, steering committee members and participants in country-led initiatives, organization-led initiative, and region-led initiatives, all of which feed into Forum meetings and decisions;

(iii) As participants in Expert Group meetings and other intersessional meetings of the Forum;

(e) Major group entities (e.g., non-governmental organizations) accredited to Forum sessions could have greater involvement in the Forum process as advisers to a United Nations regional group. For example, the African Forest Forum had served for a number of years as a technical adviser to the Group of African States during Forum negotiations;

(f) If the Forum were to establish an intergovernmental committee to negotiate a global legally binding agreement (or other negotiated outcomes), the

[3] Agenda 21 (adopted in 1992 at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development) formalized the following nine overarching categories of major groups: business and industry, children and youth, farmers and small forest landowners, indigenous peoples, local authorities, the scientific and technological community, women, and workers and trade unions. The construct of major groups has since been used within the context of the Economic and Social Council and United Nations conferences and working groups related to sustainable development, including the United Nations Forum on Forests.

[4] "Major groups" may not be a categorization used by individual Member States.

Forum would decide the committee's modalities, which could include more inclusive and flexible models for enhanced participation by major groups and other stakeholders;

(g) There were many opportunities through multi-stakeholder forums and intergovernmental processes outside the Forum in which Member States could engage the private sector, non-governmental organizations, indigenous peoples and local communities, and other forest stakeholders, as well as the media;

(h) The term "major group" dates from 1992 and might, in many cases, shift power and authority over forests away from national Governments;

(i) Participants noted that it would be useful if a comparative review were undertaken, prior to the second meeting of the Expert Group, on the ways in which other organizations encourage and accommodate stakeholder participation, including Partnership organizations (e.g., FAO, the Global Environment Facility, the World Bank and the secretariats of the Rio Conventions), other intergovernmental initiatives (e.g., the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (REDD), the Forest Investment Programme), selected regional processes (e.g., Congo Basin Forest Partnership) and more informal public-private partnerships (e.g., Tropical Forest Alliance 2020, Forest Legality Alliance).

E. Low-cost, high-value actions achievable over a relevant two-to-three-year time frame under the international arrangement on forests

17. Participants were invited to share their views on the questions prepared for the topic, as well as other views. The key points raised during the discussion on low-cost, high-value actions that could be achieved in a two-to-three-year time frame are summarized below:

(a) Participants identified the following examples of low-cost, high-value actions that the Forum could focus on early on to demonstrate clear progress and tangible results or products within a relatively short period:

(i) Harmonize reporting templates and synchronize reporting cycles with other major forest reporting processes (e.g., the global forest resources management of FAO) to reduce burdens on Member States;

(ii) Develop coordination and communication products;

(iii) Improve coordination on themes, such as sectoral governance; cross-sectoral coordination; harmonization of public procurement policies; and forest law enforcement, governance and trade;

(iv) Make use of the annual International Day of Forests (March 21) to promote the work of the Forum and sustainable forest management objectives and practices and highlight the contribution of forests to the topics of other international years, as designated by the General Assembly (e.g., 2014 is the International Year of Small Island Developing States and the International Year of Family Farming);

(v) Identify other key dates, events and opportunities to promote forests and sustainable forest management and raise awareness about the issues through key messages at the national and international levels. (States members of the Forum could help to identify such opportunities);

(vi) Identify gaps in the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests;

(b) Forest financing strategies were identified early on as a key area for further joint efforts and information exchange;

(c) Capacity-building and mutual learning could be fostered by identifying innovative ways to highlight achievements and share best practices in areas such as training programmes on the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests, pilot sites to assess implementation of the instrument, community forestry, cross-sectoral engagement, national tree-planting initiatives, education materials and workshops;

(d) Voluntary forest policy peer reviews could also be useful for further information exchange, mutual learning, better implementation at the national level and leverage of funding;

(e) It was noted that Global Forest Watch, a partnership of nearly 50 organizations hosted by the World Resources Institute, would make freely available geospatial and other data related to logging, agriculture and mining in many countries. While some Governments already provided that information, the release of such information by other Member States would constitute a low-cost, high-value action. An announcement to that effect could be made at the eleventh session of the Forum;

(f) Participants recognized the importance of being flexible on ways to achieve specific key products and which entities would undertake them. While the secretariat of the Forum and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests were able to develop some products, the Forum could explore other approaches, such as establishing time-bound working groups to address specific topics and develop specific products of mutual interest;

(g) Participants also noted a strong linkage between low-cost, high-value initiatives and the possible strategic plan for the international arrangement beyond 2015.

F. Scaling up the facilitative process under the international arrangement on forests

18. Participants were invited to share their views on the questions prepared for the topic, as well as other views. The key points raised during the discussion on scaling up the facilitative process are summarized below:

(a) The functions and understanding of the facilitative process should be re-examined and may need to be adjusted. For example, the function of the facilitative process to identify obstacles and opportunities might be changed to "overcome obstacles and take advantage of existing opportunities" in order to better fulfil the spirit of the facilitative process;

(b) There was also a need for greater transparency in how facilitative process resources were prioritized and allocated. The potential to use existing resources to leverage additional funds to help countries overcome obstacles should be explored;

(c) Many countries did not know how to take advantage of international forest-related funding mechanisms, such as the funding initiatives for the Global Environment Facility and for the enhanced version of the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (REDD+) and other multilateral sources. A clearing-house that would serve to identify available sources and their condition and/or requirements and to provide assistance in connecting countries to those potential funding sources would be a useful component of the facilitative process. The FAO sourcebook for funding sustainable forest management was an example of a good initiative, but more was needed. It would be helpful to have more information on existing clearing-house operations carried out by other entities of the United Nations system;

(d) Experts would like to see a simplification of the current processes to access existing funding mechanisms;

(e) Often there was competition within national Governments for resources available through the Global Environment Facility and other multilateral funding mechanisms. The alignment of national policies to access existing funding mechanisms was important;

(f) If a global forest fund was not feasible at the time, other creative financing actions would be needed, not only to identify gaps in implementation but also to promote implementation;

(g) In that regard, South-South cooperation needed to take place along with North-South cooperation and triangular cooperation and partnerships. Support did not always need to be in the form of financial aid. It could also include the transfer of technology and skills, technical and scientific cooperation and other forms of support;

(h) The private sector also had a role to play through public-private partnerships and corporate social responsibility initiatives, not only in the forest sector but also in interconnected sectors with a sustainable forest management or landscape management approach;

(i) It would also be useful to develop a step-by-step approach on how to create a funding process at the regional level, including regional forest funds.

G. Possible elements of a strategic plan for the international arrangement on forests

19. An independent consultant for the country-led initiative, Stephanie Caswell, had introduced the discussion paper on possible elements of a strategic plan for the future of the international arrangement (annex 13). Participants were invited to share their views on the questions prepared for the topic, as well as other views. The key points raised during the discussion on possible elements of a strategic plan for the international arrangement are summarized below:

(a) Participants expressed their appreciation of the discussion paper on the possible elements of a strategic plan for the future international arrangement;

(b) While the idea of a strategic plan resonated with many participants, it was recognized that there would be limitations to developing such a plan until concrete decisions were made by the Forum at its eleventh session about the future of the international arrangement, including its institutional and financial set up and components;

(c) Despite limitations on developing a full strategic plan at the time, many participants saw a number of elements of the future international arrangement, regarding which there was a relatively high degree of confidence in future scenarios and on the basis of which some work could be proactively undertaken, without having to wait for work to begin on a strategic plan. For example, there appeared to be opportunities to make progress on the following:

(i) Moving forward ideas on low-cost, high-value actions (e.g., strengthening monitoring, assessment and reporting);

(ii) Further development of a "crosswalk" between the global objectives on forests and the sustainable development goals;

(iii) Consideration of what targets (and ultimately indicators) might be identified in a future strategy and how they might be aligned with the sustainable development goals;

(d) Speaking of a strategic tool, plan or approach was less important than being proactive. The strategy could be adjusted when there was greater clarity on the specific future direction of the international arrangement;

(e) The proposed 2030 planning horizon for a strategic plan seemed reasonable, particularly if the plan was adaptable throughout its delivery period. Transition issues encountered early in the post-2015 period could be managed by maintaining a flexible, responsive and "tactical" approach to updating/adjusting the strategic plan to reflect changing policy and programme realities over time;

(f) A four-year work programme cycle could be useful in that regard and could be aligned to take into account the biennial United Nations regular budget calendar and processes;

(g) The sustainable development goals would be an important reference framework for a strategic plan. The potential alignment with the sustainable development goals through a strategic plan would create significant work for the international arrangement in the future, given, for example, the expected equally significant shifts in the bodies and organizations of the United Nations system and the means of implementation. There were limitations to elaborating targets for the global objectives on forests or for the sustainable development goals before Forum took decisions at its eleventh session;

(h) Targets for the global objectives on forests and/or the sustainable development goals should be measurable and manageable and draw on existing work in respect of forest-related indicators;

(i) Several participants signalled a willingness to begin informal work through a virtual group on targets and issues relating to the sustainable development goals;

(j) Thought should be given to developing a one-page strategy statement or outlook for a strategic plan that showed at a glance the status of the international arrangement under the plan;

(k) The strategic plan brought with it significant communications potential for forest interests, the international arrangement and the forest-related sustainable development goals. The international arrangement could serve as a strong lobby for key strategic goals, which would entail thinking in terms of marketing and messages with, for example, a small number of clear, accessible objectives.

III. Key message and follow-up points

20. Participants agreed that business as usual was not an acceptable option. There was wide support for the international arrangement to be strengthened beyond 2015. The importance of the eleventh session of the Forum was recognized in that regard.

21. Participants expressed interest in having a better understanding of the following when considering proposals and options for strengthening the international arrangement:

(a) General budgetary implications of the options presented in the independent assessment report, including with respect to strengthening the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, establishing a UN-Forests entity, establishing a United Nations special envoy on forests and convening biennial regional meetings in the years in which the Forum did not meet, as well as the implications of these for the Secretariat;

(b) Feasibility of moving forward on components associated with each option, including the above elements, within the context of the United Nations system, and the Economic and Social Council in particular;

(c) Current terms of reference, modalities and funding sources and levels for possible models for strengthening and possibly formalizing the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, including UN-Water and other models mentioned in the independent assessment report (e.g., REDD, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services) that could inform consideration of the issue;

(d) Rules of procedure of the Economic and Social Council on participation and intervention in Forum sessions by accredited non-governmental organizations, other organizations within major groups and regional/subregional bodies, and how those procedures compared to the practices of other Partnership member organizations;

(e) United Nations regular budgetary cycle and preparatory process and how requests for budgetary and staffing resources for the Forum secretariat were prepared and processed;

(f) Contribution of forests to the achievement of the proposed sustainable development goals and ways to communicate such contributions;

(g) Contribution of a possible strategic plan for the international arrangement beyond 2015.

22. Participants welcomed the information provided by the FAO participant regarding Partnership members drafting views and proposals on strengthening the role and functioning of the Partnership as input to second meeting of the Expert Group.

23. Participants requested the Co-Chairs to bring the Co-Chairs summary report on the workshop on the international arrangement on forests beyond 2015 to the attention of Expert Group at its second meeting.

24. Participants expressed their deep appreciation to the Government of China, in particular the State Forestry Administration, for hosting and organizing the workshop on the international arrangement beyond 2015 in support of the Forum. Participants also expressed their appreciation to the co-sponsors for their generous support to the workshop.